

26 Jan 71

C/VNO

CA Carver, Jr.

Attached is a package Jim Engle handed me at the 26 January Sullivan meeting. State's draft reply strikes me as a trifle mushy but I am reluctant to make a federal case over a response to a letter from two high school students. On the other hand, this is a fairly touchy issue and an Agency-sanctioned response to the students might be used as a precedent in any future inquiries from other sources. I would suggest, therefore, you let me know what you and Bill Nelson think and bring Tom K into the act if you feel it advisable to do so. I will probably touch base with the Director before calling Jim back but would like to give him an answer by close of business on the 27th.

George A. Carver, Jr.  
Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs

Attachment

1- VN Ette  
1- SAC Chrou ✓

Dear Mr. Heinrich<sup>it</sup> and Miss Worst.

The Vice President has asked the Department of State to reply to the letter which you sent to him on behalf of your contemporary History Class regarding an interview quoted in U. S. News and World Report.

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The questions which you pose in your letter appear to be related to the possibility that the CIA may have been involved in the 1963 coup d'etat against Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem. I believe that this matter is adequately dealt with by Mr. Hilsman in the chapter of To Move a Nation, from which you quoted. It seems to me that Mr. Hilsman, who was following developments very closely from his post in the State Department at the time of the coup, makes it clear that U. S. Government agencies were not privy to the plans to overthrow Diem. He does mention that a U. S. official was informed by a Vietnamese officer that some sort of conspiracy was under-way. However, Mr. Hilsman writes that the Americans received no details and were unable to determine whether there was in fact a plot. He describes the pros and cons of "rocking the boat" which were weighed as officials in Washington considered what action if any to take regarding the fragmentary information at their disposal. The fact that a CIA official was later given access to the headquarters of the leaders after the coup had been launched does not<sup>imply</sup> imply prior CIA involvement.

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Your other quotation from To Move a Nation is not an affirmation of CIA involvement in the countries named. In the chapter from which the quotation is drawn Mr. Hilsman gives an appraisal of the CIA and his viewpoint of the proper role for such an intelligence-gathering agency. He cites instances where individual officials, in his opinion, exceeded this proper role. However, in the passage which you quote he is alluding to the widespread <sup>and erroneous</sup> tendency to impute all sorts of problems <sup>and mistakes</sup> ~~erroneously~~ to the CIA. He pointed out that the CIA thus "got credit for almost everything unpleasant that happened in many countries..."

I hope that the foregoing comments will be of assistance to you and the members of the class.

Sincerely yours,

James B. Engle  
Director  
Viet-Nam Working Group

EA/VN:JDMoffett:pn:1/20/71

Contemporary History  
Class  
Mr. Heinricher  
Shaler High School  
1800 Mt. Royal Blvd.  
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Dear Mr. Agnew:

We have noticed a discrepancy between you and Roger Milman on CIA involvement. We watched you on the David Frost show, and we read the text of the David Frost show in the October 12, 1970 issue of U.S. News and World Report; we are quoting from that:

Mr. Silverman: ...If that's the case why are the U.S.' hands so damned bloodied at his (Dien) execution?

Mr. Agnew: I don't think the U.S.' hands are bloodied at anybody's execution in Vietnam.

Mr. Silverman: Are you saying there was no CIA involvement in the toppling of the Dien regime?

Mr. Agnew: Exactly! Exactly! What gives you thought that there was?

Mr. Silverman: Would you admit, just to set some perspective here, that there has been CIA involvement in other regimes-- for ex. with our hands in Guatemala?

Mr. Agnew: Well, let me just respond by asking you one question.

Mr. Silverman: I would appreciate a response to this question, Mr. Vice President. It has tormented me for some time.

Mr. Agnew: Give me the question again.

Mr. Silverman: The question is: Would you concede that the CIA has toppled other sovereign governments?

Mr. Agnew: No, but I think they have tried to persuade people in another country, where they feel that the administration is terribly unfair and hostile, to certain courses of action, just as other nations. I'm being completely frank now. The Soviets are encouraging a lot of people that are involved in antiwar movements here at the present time, as are the Communist Chinese, as are the North Vietnamese.

Mr. Silverman: But you decry that--you protested, and legitimately so, I suppose, from your point of view. Why then do you not raise the same grievances about the CIA involvement?

\*Mr. Agnew: All I can say is that the U.S. is lily-white compared to most countries in this respect.

On page 86 of To Love A Nation by Roger Hilsman, we quote:

In Southeast Asia, for example, there was hardly a single country in which it was not widely believed that CIA had been behind some major event. The Burmese had no doubt that CIA had supported the Nationalist Chinese troops operating on their soil. The Lao believed that the CIA had created and brought down several successive governments. Sihanouk in Cambodia was convinced that the CIA had financed the effort of the so-called "Free Khmer" movement that had attempted to overthrow him. Sukarno in Indonesia had absolute proof of CIA's complicity in the 1958 rebellion.

Specifically regarding Vietnam, in the chapter "Cottordamrong: The

Coup Against Diem", on pp.519-520, we again quote:

An American CIA official who had spent many years in Vietnam made his way to the Vietnamese headquarters, and since he was so well known and trusted they let him stay and permitted him to keep the embassy informed of events by telephone. And the embassy in turn sent the messages "Flash" to Washington. The American official learned that the generals had been...

We concluded that not the action, but the in-action of the CIA was at fault. If we had supported Diem, why did we not "rock the political boat" in Vietnam? Surely, we could have warned him of the impending assassination- or at least of the danger. Were you aware of Roger Hilsman's above statements when you remarked: "All I can say is that the U.S. is lily-white compared to most countries in this respect"? Please clarify this statement for us, and we would like to know your opinion on CIA involvement.

Sincerely,

*Albert Hilsman*

*Joyce Worst, student*

Shaler High School's Contemporary History Classes

1/25/71

Mr. George Conner

George,

Attached is our suggested  
draft of a reply we have been  
asked to prepare for the VP to  
a letter he received re CIA.

Could you please arrange  
clearance or changes with the  
appropriate office in your agency?

Thanks.

Jim Kingle

phone 63-22038